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Chef and Tell

Natalie Morris on Giving Up Good Food Finder and Her Upcoming Bean Book

By **Lauren Saria** Mon., Jan. 19 2015 at 9:00 AM
Categories: **Chef and Tell**

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Courtesy of Natalie Morris

Natalie Morris

Professor
Sustainable Food Systems program at Mesa Community College
nataliemorris.com

To those in the local food community, particularly those with an interest in sustainable food, the name Natalie Morris should be a familiar one. The trained chef turned

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entrepreneur created **Good Food Finder**, an online directory that identifies and locates local food producers around the state.

Morris started that project in 2011 after receiving a fellowship grant from the University of Arizona's Borderlands Food and Water Security program at the Southwest Center. She spent years gathering information from all over the state and putting it in an easy-to-use online form, but in October of this year made the decision to **turn the project over** to Local First Arizona.

"I sort of had to admit to myself that I needed to send my kid off to college," Morris says of the decision.

*See also: **Good Food Finder: Good Food Allies Create a Database of Local Producers***

It also gave her time to focus on her latest project: writing a book about the global history of beans.

The book, which won't be completed for some time, will be a part of the **Edible series** published by **Reaktion Books**. Other selections in the series cover topics from tequila to truffles and even sauces, herbs, and offal.

She's been working on the book for about six months now, and though she admits she wasn't initially so enthusiastic about the topic, Morris says it only took a few days for her to fall in love with the bean. In addition to researching different types of beans from all over the world, Morris will explore the role of beans in folklore, how to grow them, and even how she thinks they'll be relevant in the future.

One of the most striking things Morris says she's noticed so far is that despite beans' prevalence in our diets, the food remains quite humble.

"They're such a plebeian food," she says. "It's funny how subtle they are, yet so prominent."

Working on the book has meant moving away from her work in sustainable food, to some extent. (Though Morris still teaches core classes for the Sustainable Food System program at Mesa Community College.) But Morris says focusing on food history still works toward the same goal: bringing people together.

"Because who cares if we see climate change if we don't have each other?" she says.

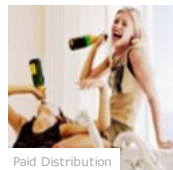
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